

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 IO-12

DPW-01 OMB-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 RSR-01 /096 W

----- 086140

P 021258 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1078

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 7652

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT PINS MILI VS

SUBJECT: SITREP MAY 1, 1973

THE FOLLOWING SENT SAIGON FROM CAN THO 1 MAY 73 REPEATED
FOR YOUR ACTION AND INFO. QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAN THO 0265

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, MOPS, PINT, CA, HU, ID, PL, VS

SUBJECT: SITREP MAY DAY, 1973

1. SUMMARY: MILITARY ACTION IN MR IV INTENSIFIED SLIGHTLY
APRIL 30 WITH 41 INCIDENTS REPORTED. ENEMY SAPPERS BLEW UP A
VITAL BRIDGE IN VINH LONG PROVINCE. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR GAUVIN
IS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE OF THE ICCS. END SUMMARY.

2. SECURITY SITUATION: (A) BOTH SIDES RAISED THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE
IN MR IV ON THE LAST DAY OF APRIL. APRIL 30'S REPORTED ENEMY
INITIATED INCIDENTS TOTALED 41, COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS DAY'S
29. THESE INCLUDED FOUR GROUND ATTACKS, 25 ATTACKS BY FIRE, SEVEN
HARASSMENTS BY FIRE, AND FIVE ACTS OF SABOTAGE AND TERRORISM.
THE ARVN CLAIMED 69 VC/NVA DEAD AND TEN CAPTURED. RVNAF LOSSES
WERE REPORTED AS 20 DEAD, 103 WOUNDED, AND SIX MISSING.
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(B) VC/NVA FROGMEN APRIL 30 BLEW UP THE HIGHWAY 7 BRIDGE OVER
THE MANG THIT RIVER. HIGHWAY 7 IS THE PRINCIPAL OVERLAND ROUTE
CONNECTING VINH LONG AND VINH BINH PROVINCES. NO GVN CASUALTIES
WERE REPORTED, AND THE PERPETRATORS ESCAPED UNSCATHED. THE

BRIDGE, WHICH HND IDEAS ON HOW TO ACHIEVE PEACE SETTLEMENT. ONLY BRIGHT NOTE IN VIEW OF US WHICH EGYPTIANS HAD ENUNCIATED WAS REFERENCE TO RECENT PRESS STATEMENT BY ASST SECY SISCO IN WHICH HE HAD REFERRED TO US INTERESTS IN ARAB WORLD. GHORBAL ADDED US POLICY IN MOST CHARITABLE POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION SOUGHT ONLY TO PRESERVE STATUS QUO, A SITUATION INHERENTLY UNSATISFACTORY TO EGYPT, IN ORDER EXTRACT MORE CONCESSIONS BY REASON OF PAST EGYPTIAN FORTHCOMINGNESS. HAFEZ ISMAIL SAID US HAD LONG FOBBERED EGYPT OFF WITH REFERENCES TO COMPELLING EFFORTS OF USG TO END VIETNAM INVOLVEMENT. LEAST THAT COULD NOW BE EXPECTED FROM USG IN ISMAIL VIEW WAS FOR USG TO NOW MAKE CLEAR BY DEED AS WELL AS WORD THAT IT WAS REALLY PREPARED TO WORK FOR A SOLUTION WHICH TOOK INTO ACCOUNT INTERESTS OF BOTH SIDES TO DISPUTE. REDIES' EGYPTIAN INTERLOCUTORS POINTED TO TONE OF SHOCKED DISMAY IN RECENT SADAT INTERVIEW. THEY SAID SADAT WAS OF THE OPINION THAT US HAD LET HIM DOWN DURING INITIAL EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE INTERIM AGREEMENT IN 1971. HOWEVER, HAYKAL NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME DOMESTIC CRITICISM OF HARSH NATURE OF SADAT'S STATEMENTS AS WELL.

3. NEVERTHELESS, EGYPTIANS HAD CLEARLY EXPRESSED CONTINUING INTEREST AND HOPE THAT BASIS MIGHT BE FOUND FOR CONTINUING DIALOGUE WITH USG. THEY CITED REMARK REPORTEDLY MADE TO HAFEZ ISMAIL IN WASHINGTON THAT WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS FORMULA TAKING INTO ACCOUNT EGYPTIAN INTEREST IN SOVEREIGNTY OVER EGYPTIAN TERRITORY AND ISRAELI NEED FOR SECURITY AS PROVIDING BASIS FOR CONTINUING DIALOGUE. THIS REMARK SHOWED REAL UNDERSTANDING OF SORT OF SOLUTION EGYPT COULD ACCEPT. EGYPTIANS POINTED OUT THAT IN NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW

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SADAT EXPRESSED PUBLICLY-- AT LEAST TO EGYPTIAN EARS FOR THE FIRST TIME-- WILLINGNESS ACCEPT IN CONTEXT OF OVERALL SETTLEMENT PRESENCE OF INTERNATIONAL FORCE AT SHARM AL-SHAYKH. THIS PUBLIC RESTATEMENT WAS INDICATIVE SADAT'S INTEREST THAT SHARM AL-SHAYKH ISSUE BE ONE SUBJECT OF CONTINUING DIALOGUE BETWEEN EGYPT AND US.

4. HIS INTERLOCUTORS TOLD REDIES THAT SADAT STATEMENT IN MARCH 26 SPEECH THAT EGYPT COULD ACCEPT ONLY AN OVERALL PEACE SETTLEMENT WHICH TOOK INTO ACCOUNT INTERESTS OF ALL PARTIES TO DISPUTE (E. G. OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES AND PALESTINIANS) WAS MAXIMALIST POSITION EXPRESSED FOR BARGAINING PURPOSES. ON THE OTHER HAND THEY THOUGHT IT HIGHLY UNLIKELY EGYPT WOULD BE PREPARED ACCEPT ANY SOLUTION WHICH CALLED FOR EVEN PARTIAL ABROGATION OF SOVEREIGN RIGHTS OVER NATIONAL TERRITORY. EGYPTIANS HAD ENUMERATED SEVERAL ARGUMENTS TO REDIES AGAINST ACCEPTANCE INTERIM SOLUTION. TO EGYPTIANS CONCEPT OF INTERIM SOLUTION HAD BEEN VIABLE IN 1971 IN POLITICAL EFFORT TO SECURE CEASEFIRE. SEVERAL YEARS HAD PASSED SINCE THEN AND EGYPTIANS FELT EGYPT COULD

NOT RPT NOT START ALL OVER AGAIN FROM WHERE WE HAD ALL LEFT OFF IN 1971. CEASEFIRE HAD BEEN MAINTAINED EVEN WITHOUT INTERIM SETTLEMENT. INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT TOO HAD ALTERED MARKEDLY SINCE 1971 WITNESSING PROGRESS IN MOVEMENT OF DETENTE BETWEEN SUPER POWERS, AND EGYPT HAD REQUESTED WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET TROOPS IN MID-1972 IN ORDER TO PLACE ARAB- ISRAEL DISPUTE AT ONE REMOVE FROM SUPER- POWER CONFRONTATION. IN ACTUALITY PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL AT THIS TIME OF ISRAELIS FROM SUEZ CANAL WOULD MEAN TO EGYPT ONLY MAINTENANCE OF THE STATUS QUO BUT AT LINE SOME KILOMETERS TO THE EAST OF THE CANAL. EGYPT HAD NO RPT NO INTEREST IN SUCH AN INTERIM SETTLEMENT.

5. EGYPTIANS SAID THAT WHILE GOE CONTINUED TO HOPE FOR DIPLOMATIC MOVEMENT TOWARD A SETTLEMENT, THE EGYPTIAN LEADERSHIP WOULD NEVERTHELESS CONTINUE TO PREPARE FOR EVENTUALITY OF HAVING TO STEER A MORE DIFFICULT COURSE. IN LIGHT OF PRESENT US POSITION, WHICH IN EGYPTIAN ESTIMATION IS CLEARLY PRO ISRAEL, EGYPTIANS NOW FELT GOE HAD BEEN IN ERROR TO HAVE HELD BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH USG ON ACHIEVING PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT WITHOUT PREPARING FOR
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SUCH TALKS THROUGH PREVIOUS EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A UNITED ARAB STANCE AGAINST OVERALL US INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. EGYPTIAN POLICY IS NOW DIRECTED TO MAKING UP FOR THIS OMISSION. GOE MAKING THIS ATTEMPT WITH EYES OPEN AND EXPECTS NO RAPID RESULTS. SADAT UPON ASSUMING PRESIDENCY HAD INITIATED NEW POLICY OF EGYPTIAN NON- INTERFERENCE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF OTHER ARAB STATES. THIS POLICY HAD NOT RPT NOT PAID OFF FROM EGYPTIAN STANDPOINT. MAJORITY OF OTHER ARAB STATES KEPT PRESENTING DIFFICULTIES TO EGYPTIAN PEACE EFFORTS BY OUTWARDLY TAKING HARD LINE STANCE TOWARD ISRAEL BUT IN FACT ARAB STATES DID NOT RPT NOT SUPPORT EGYPTIAN POLICY AND EVEN GLOATED OVER DIFFICULTIES BY WHICH CAIRO BESIEGED. EGYPTIANS SAID THAT A GRADUAL INCREASE IN EGYPTIAN ANTI- US PROPAGANDA MIGHT BE EXPECTED SEVERAL WEEKS HENCE. OTHER ALTERNATIVE PROPOUNDED TO REDIES WAS POSSIBILITY FOR EGYPT TO GRADUALLY INCREASE TENSION IN MILITARY CONTEXT IN ORDER TO FOCUS WORLD ATTENTION ON ME PROBLEM, FOR EXAMPLE IN UNSC. REDIES RECEIVED IMPRESSION THAT NO RPT NO FINAL DECISIONS AS TO TIMING AND SCALE OF POSSIBLE ACTIONS HAD YET BEEN MADE. HE SENSED THAT EGYPTIAN LEADERSHIP WAS CONSCIOUS OF RISKS INVOLVED.

6. REDIES' GENERAL IMPRESSION FROM HIS TALKS WAS THAT EGYPTIANS SENSED DANGER IN ALLOWING THINGS TO CONTINUE TO DRIFT. ONCE EGYPTIAN POLICY INITIATED ALONG LINES SPELLED OUT IN PREVIOUS PARAGRAPH, POLICY WOULD DEVELOP ITS OWN MOMENTUM AND LATER ATTEMPTS TO REDIRECT EGYPTIAN ACTION IN MORE POSITIVE VEIN WOULD BE DIFFICULT OF ACHIEVEMENT. EGYPTIANS HAD NO RPT NO DOUBTS THAT SOVIET UNION WOULD

EXPLOIT SUCH A SITUATION TO IMPROVE SOVIET STANCE IN ARAB
WORLD. IN CAIRO'S VIEW DIALOGUE WITH USG RENEWED BY ISMAIL
TRIP TO WASHINGTON HAD AT LEAST TEMPORARILY BEEN SHELVED
BY SUBSEQUENT INDICATIONS OF YET GREATER US MILITARY AND
ECONOMIC SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL. IN THIS CONTEXT HAYKAL HAD
EMPHASIZED THAT CONTINUING DRIFT WITHOUT ANY SIGN OF REA-
SONABLE EFFORT TO ACHIEVE SETTLEMENT FROM ANY QUARTER,
INCLUDING THE US, WOULD EVENTUALLY LEAD TO AN EXPLOSION IN
THE ME SITUATION. ROGERS

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 10 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: VS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 MAY 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SAIGON07652
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730560/abqcehpz.tel
Line Count: 173
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 23 OCT 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16-Aug-2001 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <01-Oct-2001 by willialc>; RELEASED <23-Oct-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <29-Nov-2001 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> mcm 971113
Subject: SITREP MAY 1, 1973
TAGS: PINS, MILI, PINT
To: STATE INFO JEC PARIS
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005